

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1969) met members of the Institute for Social Research in the 1920s through Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and became an unofficial member. Horkheimer became director of the Institute in 1930 and wrote about the group's goals in his 1937 essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory": to integrate social science with philosophy and bring integrity to politics and critical theory. When the Nazis forced Adorno to leave his teaching position at the University of Frankfurt, he left Germany in 1934 for Oxford. Horkheimer took the Institute first to Geneva and then to New York, where he eventually found a job for Adorno at Princeton. Adorno reluctantly moved to the United States in 1938 and worked closely with the Institute again. Adorno and Horkheimer worked together in California in the 1940s and returned to the University of Frankfurt in 1949, where they rebuilt the Institute and revitalized the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. The School helped recover German intellectual thought after World War II.

"The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," written in 1944, is part of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, circulated privately at first and published in Amsterdam and the U.S. in 1947 but not in Germany until 1969.¹ It has been called the most influential publication of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. The book is made up of five chapters and shorter notes, all concerning the tendency toward civilization's self-destruction, evident in reason as expressed by Enlightenment thought. Writing during the war and striving to understand the evolution of Fascism, Adorno and Horkheimer write in the book's preface: "What we had set out to do was nothing less than to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism." In addition to the famous chapter on the culture industry, there are chapters on "The Concept of Enlightenment" and "The Elements of Anti-Semitism: The Limits of Enlightenment" along with notes on myth and morality. A central premise of the entire book is also stated in their preface:

On one hand, the growth of economic productivity furnishes the conditions for a world of greater justice; on the other hand it allows the technical apparatus and the social groups which administrate a disproportionate superiority to the rest of the population. The individual as wholly devalued in relation to the economic powers, which at the same time press the control of society over nature to hitherto unsuspected heights. (xiv)²

1 The book was allegedly based on a conversation between Adorno and Horkheimer in their kitchen in New York and transcribed by Frau Adorno.

2 Information compiled from the following sources:

Icon Dictionary of Postmodern Thought, ed. Stuart Sim, Cambridge, 1998.

www.semcoop.com/detail

www.duke.edu/~iszeman/ctlecls.html

www.emory.edu/ENGLISH

www.marxists.org/glossary

www.arasite.org/adhkdofe.htm